



The background image shows a large industrial facility, likely a steel mill or refinery, during sunset or sunrise. The sky is a warm, golden-orange color. The industrial structures are dark silhouettes against the bright sky, with several tall chimneys emitting plumes of smoke. The overall atmosphere is hazy and dramatic.

A film by **Mehdi Hmili**

Countries of Production:

**Tunisia, Luxembourg, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia**

Genre: **Drama, Thriller, Fantasy**

Year of Production: **2025**

Duration: **127 minutes**



## LOGLINE:

After a tragic accident at the factory where he works, Mohamed embarks on a journey of revenge in search of truth and justice.



## FILM SYNOPSIS:

At one of Tunisia's largest steel factories, Mohamed becomes the victim of an explosion that leaves a slowly rusting piece of metal embedded in his head.

After being sidelined from his job and reassigned as a guard, he begins a journey of vengeance that uncovers a larger conspiracy, all while his physical condition deteriorates.



## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY:

Mehdi Hmili is a Tunisian director, screenwriter, and producer whose bold and compelling films have garnered international acclaim. In France, he directed a critically praised black-and-white trilogy exploring themes of love and exile: X-MOMENT (2009), LI-LA (2011), and THE NIGHT OF BADR (2012).

He directed and co-produced STREAMS (2021), which had its world premiere at the 74th Locarno Film Festival. The film received widespread praise and won numerous awards, including Best Actress at the Cairo International Film Festival, Best Director at the Malmö Arab Film Festival, the Jury Prize at the Kolkata International Film Festival, and the Special Jury Prize at the Plurielles Festival in France. Released theatrically in Tunisia, France, and Luxembourg, STREAMS was later acquired by Netflix, Apple TV, Amazon Prime Video, and Canal+ VOD.



His latest film, EXILE, officially selected for the 78th Locarno Film Festival, had been distinguished at La Fabrique Cinéma of the 72nd Cannes Film Festival and received several development awards, including the CineGouna Screenplay Prize at the El Gouna Film Festival, affirming Hmili's unique cinematic voice.

Mehdi Hmili has also served as a jury member, consultant, and mentor at various festivals across Europe and the Arab world, including the Amman International Film Festival.

An alumnus of the prestigious Torino Film Lab and Film Independent's Global Media Makers program, he is also the showrunner of ALL ABOUT ADAM, a true-story-based series supported by the Series Lab of the Doha Film Institute. As a prominent figure in Tunisia's cinematic new wave, Hmili continues to champion bold storytelling that resonates globally.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

EXILE is my attempt to transform a place of pain and alienation into a cinematic battleground. We filmed deep inside a real steel factory among rusted machines, abandoned dormitories, and haunted corridors heavy with sacrifice. But what I wanted to capture went beyond steel and fire. I was searching for what is so often absent from the screen: men. Their silences, their laughter, their fragility, and their unyielding dignity. I followed them closely, listened to their wounds, and built a narrative from the fragments of their broken, often invisible, lives.

This is not a film noir in the classical sense. EXILE is an attempt to question and reshape the genre from within a decaying social reality. Traditional noir revolves around crime, corruption, and fatalism, but I wanted to transplant those elements into a local, Arab context, and infuse them with deeper questions of class, masculinity, and spiritual exile. This is a spiritual noir, forged from raw reality, haunted by injustice, and where crime becomes less a plot than a reflection of society's fractures.



At the heart of the film is Mohamed, a steelworker scarred by violence, carrying a piece of metal lodged in his skull, a ghostly remnant of the very system that crushed him. His whispered investigation into the death of a fellow worker is not linear; it is obstructed, deformed by layers of silence, power, and corruption. I chose to shoot this story with a close, visceral lens, a gaze that listens rather than simply observes.

The factory in EXILE is not just a backdrop. It is a living organism, devouring the bodies within it, yet unable to erase their humanity. The imagery is dark, metallic, drenched in shadow. The camera does not merely record it listens. The soundscape is filled with mechanical sighs and explosions, but it is the silences that echo the loudest.

The men in this film are not conventional victims. They are broken heroes, laughing in the shadows, dreaming between shifts, enduring the unbearable with wounded grace. I wanted to reveal this contradiction: the brutality of labor, and the tenderness of those who endure it.

EXILE is not only about exile in the literal sense. It speaks of inner estrangement from the body, from history, from one's place in the world. It is a story of men trapped between memory and machinery, between silence and unraveling. The film does not follow the rules of its genre, it interrogates them, and transforms cinema into a space for resistance, reflection, and beauty.

With this film, I wanted to turn silence into cinema.



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A dark, atmospheric photograph showing a group of men standing outdoors at night. They are silhouetted against a bright, hazy light source, possibly a fire or a window. The scene is filled with smoke or dust, and some dry, yellowish plants are visible in the foreground. The men are dressed in various casual and semi-casual attire. In the background, a large window with a grid pattern is visible, with some light coming through the panes.

## FESTIVALS:

World Premiere - Locarno Film Festival, Switzerland

Namur International Francophone Film Festival - FIFF

Montpellier Mediterranean Film Festival - CINEMED

Cairo International Film Festival



## CAST & CREW:

Written and Directed By: *Mehdi Hmili*

Produced By: *Moufida Fedhila - Mehdi Hmili - Donato Rotunno - Michel Balagué*

Co-producers: *Red Sea Film Festival Foundation, Doha Film Institute*

Production Companies: *Yol Film House (Tunisia), Tarantula (Luxembourg), Volte Film (France)*

Starring: *Ghanem Zrelli, Maram Ben Aziza, Slim Baccar, Younes Ferhi, Mohamed Kolsi, Mourad Gharsalli*

Cinematography: *Farouk Laaridh*

Editing: *Rawchen Mizouri*

Music: *Amélie Legrand*

World Sales By: *MAD World*

Arab Sales And Distribution By: *MAD Distribution*